CONCLUSION

A peasant is one who is actually tilling soil and one who is attached to land for subsistence and livelihood as owner, as hired labour, as a forced labour and a slave.

Since agriculture is the mainstay of population in the Indian society in general, the peasantry are the community of people who are actually involved in agricultural operations.

A number of scholars have defined the meaning of the peasant in the Indian context. A leading scholar Irfan Habib, the father of peasant history in India, says: “the peasant to mean a person who undertakes agriculture on his own, working with his own implements and using the labour of his family.”

A.R. Desai describes "a peasantry which is indebted and bonded and which in the context of pauperization and politicization in Colonial countries provides extremely cheap labour, and is subjected to super-exploitation, in forms reminiscent of descriptions provided by Karl Marx in Capital".

Having been ideologically influenced by Engels, D.N. Dhanagare too viewed the peasantry "as internally split unorganised and politically important unless mobilised by organised working class".
The peasantry consists of small agricultural producers, who with the help of simple equipment and the consumer of their families produce mainly for the consumption and for the fulfillment of obligations to holders of political and economic power.

There are no specific studies on this topic attempted so far. Therefore an attempt has been made to bring to light the role work and socio-economic condition of peasantry during 9th to 14th century A.D. It will be a significant contribution to the history of Tamil country.

The Tamil country that was ruled by the Imperial Cholas and Second Pandyas or Latter Pandyas during this period of study from 9th to 14th century A.D. and the present Tamil Nadu of the medieval Tamil country forms the universe of study.

In the history of the Tamil country the period from 9th to 14th century is a remarkable one because monarchical form of Government with the emergence of two imperialistic powers such as the Imperial Cholas and the second Pandyas, seemed to have been feudal in character and marked with new economic and social and cultural evolution. From the 9th to 14th century more lands were brought under cultivation. During this period the extension of territories were done by the Imperial Cholas as well as the second or latter Pandyas. There were lot of changes taking place in land owning patterns, development of irrigation facilities and raising of different
crops, etc. The land owning patterns under the Cholas and Pandyas were almost the same.

An extensive use of epigraphical sources like, South Indian Inscriptions, Annual Reports on Indian Epigraphy, Foreign Notices and perusal of available literary materials have been tapped in this attempt. A number of published scholarly works supplement the information culled out from primary sources.

The entire work is divided into small chapters under relevant subheadings for the clear understanding of the study. There are four chapters in this study which exclude Introduction and Conclusion.

Monarchical system of government was the principal political system of the Medieval Tamil country as elsewhere in India. By 6th century A.D. onwards due to the brahminical influence divine attributes were made to the king also. Thereafter the monarch or the king was also treated not only as a warrior and lord of the land or territory which he conquered but also benevolent king next only to God. This could be seen in a number of meikirti inscriptions issued by the medieval Chola and Pandya kings assuming titles as peruvudaiyar, nayanar, chakravarthi and others of the same kind.

The monarch having been possessed with military power and religious sanction who upheld his superiority over people as protector and as saviour. Thus he became the absolute owner of the land.
Agriculture was the principal occupation of the subjects. Land was the life and breathe of the people. Land tax was the principal source of the revenue to the state. Land rent or land tax levied from individual land owners and institutions constituted nearly $3/5$ of the state income during the period under study.

Since the king being absolute owner of the land, he had taken a special care in the distribution and development of land in the state. In the process, the king was greatly influenced by the factors like retention of state’s absolute power and recognition of the role of other caste and religions in the society. Monarchy during the Chola and later Pandya times both in real and nominal terms exercised the power over people with the help of military and bureaucracy. At the micro level, the land distribution and development activities even though done with local practices and traditions, they were all done in the name of the monarch. We have references to say that some of the royal decrees were sent to the *Urs* and *Sabhas* while dealing with issues relating to land and election. Activities referring to land distribution, reclamation and development though done by people independently both at the micro and macro level, they were allowed by the monarch as long as they helped to augment the state resources as also helped the state power and its administrative apparatus unchallenged and undisturbed.

Thus the monarch was venerated and honoured as the lord of military, director of bureaucracy and benefactor of the Brahmins and
temples. Besides, the caste and religion the two major concepts too were placed at the altar of the king’s power. It was also one of the principal duties of the monarch to protect the caste structure and uphold Hindu religious principles. Unlike the Pallava rulers who gave much importance to yajnas or yagas to sustain their religious polity, the Chola and Pandya kings believed in building temples and granting lands to temples and the Brahmins for the same purpose.

While taking efforts to develop agriculture, both Chola and Pandya kings had undertaken several irrigation works by way of building dams, digging channels and wells and they also involved themselves in regulating water supply to needy farmers.

The pattern of land ownership during the Chola and Pandya times in the Tamil country was broad and varied in nature perpetuating and upholding a kind of semi-feudal character. In these multi-layer ownership patterns, the key owners of the lands were big vellanvagai landlords, brahmadeyams, chaturvedimangalams, devadanams, salabogams and village artisans who were entitled to the ownership of lands for their village service. These in general constitute the following set pattern: landlords and big landowners, absentee land lords, medium and small landowners.

The land donations were made for various purposes like the maintenance of the perpetual lamp, sacred food offerings, sacred bath and for remunerating the priests and other temple employees for playing musical instruments in the temple, for feeding the devotees and others and
for the expenses of festivals and other purposes. The donated land belonged to the donor or purchased from the individuals or from village assemblies or was follow land made fit for cultivation.

All the above varieties of grants can be divided into two types such as direct and indirect grants. Direct grants were those which were given by donors directly to the temples. Indirect grants included those grants which were actually given to other persons who might not belong to temple or the village administrative bodies on the condition that the charity should be maintained properly from the income or interest of the grants. Almost in all these cases, the donated interest was used for the maintenance of charity.

Agriculture was praised as the noble occupation and the land ownership secured a respect for people in the society. There were different types of land ownership patterns such as peasant proprietors, communal ownership of land and individual property holders. Land ownership rights were also transferred by means of gifts. Assignment or tax free villages to Brahmins and temple was a common mode of royal charity. The tenants and the land holders were related to the usual terms of tenure and the land holder was obliged to pay taxes like land tax, water cess and tank duty. Royal manors were just like private lands in the Chola period. During the period the village agriculture was controlled by the assembly. The communal land in the village was used for the benefit of the entire community. The proprietorship was called vellanvagai, the service tenure comprising all the holdings described variously as jivita, bhoga, kani, urilli and the eleemosynary tenures, such as brahmadeya, devadana and salabogha.
Agriculture ownership of land was used by and large as a source of social and economic power and in that it was universally accepted and recognized that the ruler of the land was the absolute owner of both the cultivable and uncultivable lands. In this dispensation, the lands were held under a variety of tenures. During the Pallava, Pandya period private sole ownership, joint venture, special tenure like service and tax-free, lease-hold lands that could be alienated on sale, mortgage or lease and the right of collecting taxes on land belonged to the king.

During the later Chola period, devadanam, the temple land, brahmadeyam, the lands granted to Brahmins, Vellan lands of the individual landlords and lands granted to devadasis and soldiers called the jivitha lands constituted the general land owning pattern of the period.

In general, the devadana and brahmadeya dispensations were exempted from taxation and in a few cases even the individual land lords and other jivithas also enjoyed this privilege at the hands of the Kings, ruling elite and other donors.

The tax was usually imposed on a village or Ur collectively. The farmers had to share the burden of tax in proportion to their land holdings. Sometimes, the village Sabha earmarked a certain portion of land for temples. But still, the village Sabha had to pay land tax for the type of land to the ruler. The villagers had to contribute their share towards this tax. It was called Ur kil-irayili.
Based on the hereditary ownership of land and in consideration for promoting religion and the so-called learned Brahmins the cultural commanders of Hindu religion and temples also in recognition of services rendered by individuals to the monarch and other service tenures, a number of medium size and small land ownership patterns were evolved and were put in operations during the period of the Cholas and latter Pandyas. In this kind of land ownership pattern, there were fully tax-free lands and partly tax paid lands enjoyed as a privilege by Brahmins, temples and other loyals of the royalty. Going by the inscriptional evidences, it is likely, that this class of people and temple along with the state could have at least 1/3 of the total cultivable land of the country. From the remainder of 2/3 of the cultivable land are 1/5 of the total population should have remained landless.

Based on the fertility, availability of water and rains, wet and dry lands of the people in the Medieval Tamil Country, the cultivators changed the crop pattern and it influenced the production of food and other items of mass consumption and trade, if there was any surplus. In fact, the production, which was sometimes surplus and many a time scarce, determined the price level of goods and commodities.

Contemporary inscriptions usually classify that lands into wet (nanjey), dry (Punjey) and garden (tottam) land. It was not unusual, however, for wet crops being raised on dry lands and vice versa. In the wet land cultivation, there were generally two harvests, the kar and pasanam. The season for the sowing of kar began in June and harvest took place around December. In the case of pasanam, sowing started in January and
the harvest took place in May. The cultivated land is called *nanjey* and dry land *punjey*.

The number of crops raised each year on paddy land was two, sometimes three. Occasionally in the inscriptions there was a mention of fields which bore three crops. The term *orupu* (single crop) *Irupu* and *kadaipu* (literally, the last) being applied to the several harvests.

The major *kar* crops were rice, *karnel* and the paddy cultivated during the time *pasan* was called *passan* crop. Apart from paddy, varagu, pulses, gingelli, castor (*amanakku*) were cultivated in the dry (*punjey*) lands.

The crops cultivated with the expectation of rainfall was called “*Vanpayir*”. The dry crops were called *pun-payir*. The dry lands were called *kalani punjai* and *kattupunjai*.

There were different types of lands such as *kalar, uvar*, pastoral lands, *karambai, kallichey, kadu, tarisu, pattapal* and others. These lands were reclaimed in the due course by the kings, *Sabha, Ur*, and individuals.

There was a steady progress in the reclamation of forest and waste land that was brought to plough. Land was reclaimed for tillage and the founding of villages and the work was often undertaken by the king. Clearance of waste was an advantage to the king who received the tax and to those who allowed to occupy it, though with the consent of the resident villagers whose right to ownership of the waste lands were proportionately diminished.
There is no means of exactly determining the price of land in those times, though we have rare instance of mention of sale of land e.g. one veli of land being sold for kalanjus of gold or one ma of land being valued of 2000 kasus in A.D. 1214. But these currencies and units of land were so variable that these figures cannot be postulated for any considerable period of time.

Leasing out the land was specially common among the owners who belonged to the non-agricultural classes or institutions which had necessarily to depend on tenants.

Under conditions of lease we may discuss the term of leases, the stipulation regarding the cultivation of crops and proper care of land, the share to be paid by the tenant to the landlord and the rights of alienation of land. Regarding term if a family took a lease, there was no reason to eject them from the lease, until they were found unsatisfactory. So the family might continue to be the tenants of that land from generation to generation and be systematically paying to the landlord his dues.

There is no clear and copious evidence about land values. There is no direct statement on the gross yield of land. The estimate of the yield involves an approximate estimate of the cost of cultivation and yield per acre. The variation is according to the quality of land and the nature of crop cultivated. An inscription from Tanjore mentions that the produce of one veli of land was 100 kalam of paddy. It was measured by the marakkal called adavallam, which is equal to a Rajakesari. An inscription of
Rajakesari Rajendra, found at Chidambaram which refers 44 veli of land yielded in all 4500 kalam of paddy, and the melvaram on this was fifty per cent of the yield. An epigraph of Kulottunga I found at Tiruvotriyur mentions that 12 veli of land yielded 576 kalam of paddy which means 48 kalam were produced from one veli of land.

Some variations are recorded with the price of paddy and rate seems generally different with fertility of the concerned.

The Tanjore inscription records the price of the paddy. The land assessment (kanikadan) was roughly one hundred kalam of paddy for each veli of land. It would be interesting to compare this with the present rate of assessment. Paddy was sold at the rate of two kalam for each kasu and three ewes could be purchased for one kasu. The rate of interest was apparently 12 ½ per cent. It was actually 1/8 kasu per year for each kasu or 3 kuruni of paddy for each kasu per year.

An inscription of Kulottunga I from Tiruvorriyur refers to cost price of 576 kalam of paddy as 144 kasus, that is, 4 kalam of paddy was sold for one kasu.

Like any other agrarian society during medieval times, agriculture under the Cholas was monsoon-based. Irrigational facilities were scarce and not in proportion to the need for water. Improved techniques for boosting the agricultural production were not attempted by the landocracy. Therefore the scarce production seemed to have been just sufficient for mass
consumption. Increase in population increased the pressure on land as more and more number of people had to depend upon agriculture. A few commercial crops raised could bring in some profits for the cultivators, because some of those crops were exported to foreign countries. By and large, the cultivators, who were the actual tillers of the soils as small peasants, tenants and landless agricultural labourers had to suffer because they could not get remunerative prices for their products.

They were at the top of the social ladder. The *Brahmadeya* land granted to Brahmins, the *Chaturvedimangalam*, the whole village or land granted to learned Brahmins, the land or village granted to the temple as *Devadana* and the land granted to a person for his service called *Jivitha* or service tenure constituted the land-ownership pattern of the period. The land ownership patterns were almost same during the reign of the Cholas and Pandyas. Peasantry during the period under study belongs to different castes and communities.

The actual tillers of the soil were the Vellalas, Pallas, Parayas, Pallis, Kallar, Agambadiyar, Maravar, Nadar, Pulaiyas and Vanniyar. The rice was the staple food of the Tamil peasantry, because paddy was mostly cultivated. They cultivated sugarcane, vegetables, fruits like banana and jack fruit. The people like Pulaiyas took meat. The peasantry wore coarse cloth. The women did not cover upper part of their bodies. The Saivism flourished during the medieval period. Most of the peasant communities worshipped the village deities. The caste system was rigid at that time. The inter-caste marriages were few and not encouraged but intra-caste marriage
system was in vogue and the widow remarriage was found prevalent among some of the peasant communities.

Thus the society during the Chola times was a stratified one where innumerable castes and sub-castes of occupation-based and tradition-sanctioned mostly centred around agriculture and artisans among them, did agriculture related jobs also. In general the higher castes like Brahmins and other Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra castes who enjoyed a high social status, were comparatively speaking a better of land owing class of people and the large chunk of the Paraiyas and Pallas as also other downtrodden communities who were landless agricultural labourers were for all practical purposes treated as slaves permanently attached to land and the land owners. The polarization effected as a result of the emergence of Vadangai and Idangai castes did not bring in any radical change in the land ownership patters favouring the forsaken population in the medieval Tamil country.

The temple was the biggest land lord of the Chola times. The temple lands were leased only to tenants and share croppers which were transferable for a fixed amount of tax. The temple authorities on the one hand and the village Sabha which had the exclusive rights over village lands also the owners of Devadana and brahmadeya lands usually employed the hired labour and cultivated their lands. The hired labourers were those who did not own any piece of land and other impoverished small land owning peasants. The temples had slaves and they were permanently in the service of the temples. They were also made to work on the temple lands.
The land holding pattern of the Chola times was also determined by the number of ploughs and cattle that any individual or institutions owned. In general the big peasants owned more number of ploughs and cattle needed for agricultural operations. From the inscriptive evidences it is revealed that a large number of peasants must have had very small land holdings. Some of the lands granted to Devadasis, temples, Brahmins and other people of kings’ liking were exempted from tax payment.

Since agriculture was the principal occupation of the people in the state, the land tax was the principal source of income of the state. In addition to paying land tax regularly to the state, a peasant had to bear the brunt of paying additional taxes to the state, like king’s coronation and birth day tax and tax for temple building works as also war tax when the king made conquests and invasions. The distrait proceedings were launched against the defaulting peasants resulting in the peasants leaving their villages disowning their lands and some times committing suicide. Especially during the failure of monsoon, floods and other natural calamitous situations the peasants suffered a lot. Unless the remission in land taxes were given to these impoverished peasants their distress would have been very bad.

The peasantry during the Chola times was based on unequal distribution of land ownership. As a consequence there existed unbridgeable gap between the big peasants or land holders and the large majority of poor or small peasants. The burden of tax was greatly felt by the poor peasants. In the absence of large scale irrigation facilities the peasants both poor and rich had to rely more on monsoons. To wealth and prosperity believed to
have been achieved during the period of Rajaraja and Rajendra Chola could have percolated to the poor peasants and their economic conditions could not improved much.

Land tax predominated over the occupation throughout the Chola country. The tax was collected in both cash and kind. In general, the tax did not fall below one-third of the produce at any time.

Settlements like agraharams, chaturvedimangalams, brahmadeyams and devadanams were exempted from taxes.

A kind of bonded-labour existed but never did the labourers suffer from want of food.

Various traders, trade guilds and artisans living in the towns, cities and villages were taxed. It is estimated that the Imperial government of the Cholas had imposed about 400 taxes on people. There was practically no profession that was left untaxed.

The inscriptions of the medieval period state that during certain periods of the later Pandyas, the taxes were heavy. The people could not bear the weight of heavy taxation and hence were at times forced to sell their lands to pay off the taxes.

The lands during the Chola and Pandya times were also irrigated by the irrigation at canals and tanks provided by the state were taxed more than
the state's natural water sources. The state stood to get more revenue by way of levying additional tax on irrigation.

In the medieval times, famines as elsewhere in India broke out frequently in Tamilnadu. During the rule of Cholas and Pandyas, due to the outbreak of famines, the people faced so many problems like scarcity of food grains, starvation and sometimes, they sold themselves to the temples as slaves. At some other times the people of particular villages deserted and abandoned their lands.

There were a few peasant's revolts that took place during the time of Imperial Cholas and later Pandyas. The peasants resorted to protest against the king, the landlords like Vellalas and Brahmins for imposition of heavy taxation. They also fought for an increase in their wages.

Along side the cash transactions the barter system also existed and the paddy was the main source of transaction.

There were a number of articles such as cut grain, cotton, turmeric, musk, saffron, sandal wood, pearls, grapes, camphor, mustard, cardamoms, lime, dhal, rice, wheat, sugar, pulses etc. These articles had both internal and external markets where they were exchanged or sold both for money and for goods.

Merchants organised themselves into guilds and were associated with similar associations in other parts of India. The Pandya country inscriptions tell about the free movement of guilds from one place to another, their
settlements, their philanthropic activities both inside the Pandya country and outside of it.

By and large during the period under study, the economic condition of people who were dependent on agriculture and particular, the peasantry, with the exception of landlords and those who enjoyed tax free lands was poor, but the treasury of the Imperial Cholas was fairly sound.